

TOWN OF MANSFIELD
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY QUALITY OF LIFE
Thursday, November 20, 2008

7:00 PM

**Mansfield Public Library
Buchanan Auditorium**

APPROVED MINUTES

Present: M. Beal, J. Briody, J. Fried, D. Keane, H. Koehn (Chair), D. Morse,
E. Paterson, S. Rhodes, D. White

Regrets: B. Clouette, C. Paulhus

Staff: M. Hart, J. Hintz, G. Padick

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

At 7:00 PM, Mayor Paterson called the meeting to order and asked the members to introduce themselves. She also explained that she had appointed Council member Helen Koehn to serve as chair of the committee.

2. Opportunity for Public to Address the Committee

None.

3. Purpose & Goals

The committee reviewed the charge issued by the Town Council. In particular, the committee is charged to evaluate quality of life issues within the community, particularly as these issues relate to off-campus student housing and behavior. Specific tasks include, but are not limited to, reviewing potential enhancements to the Mansfield Housing Code; contemplating improvements to existing public safety and nuisance abatement ordinances; and considering the adoption of additional ordinances and regulations designed to promote and protect community quality of life.

In addition, the committee should consult with various regulatory bodies and stakeholder groups, such as the Planning and Zoning Commission, the University Office for Off-campus Services, the Town/University Relations Committee, the Mansfield

Community-Campus Partnership and neighborhood associations, to generate ideas and suggestions, and to solicit feedback on various committee recommendations. Furthermore, the committee is responsible for making any appropriate recommendations to the Town Council.

For the next meeting, staff was asked to provide the committee with copies of the Mansfield 2020 (strategic plan) sections that relate to the committee's charge, as well as copies of the state enabling legislation for the Landlord Registration Ordinance. In addition, staff will look at the feasibility of providing members with copies of the International Property Maintenance Code.

4. Overview of Existing Town and University Programs

- Housing inspection - Mr. Hart, Town Manager, provided an overview of the housing inspection program, particularly the enforcement of the housing code and the landlord registration ordinance. The housing code applies to certain residential rental dwelling units and is designed to ensure that a dwelling unit meets minimum safety standards. Also, chapter 9 of the code establishes a rental certification zone, and dwelling units within the zone may only be rented with a rental certificate issued following an inspection of the premises. Rental certificates are good for a two-year period, and the town has recently initiated the second two-year inspection cycle. The landlord registration ordinance was adopted pursuant to state enabling legislation, and requires landlords to register an address with the town. The registration ordinance is helpful in that it provides mechanism for the town to track landlords and rental units.
- Zoning enforcement – Mr. Padick, Director of Planning, provided an overview of the enforcement of the zoning regulations. In recent years, a number of single-family homes in more traditional neighborhoods have converted to student rentals, and the department currently has 58 sites on its watch list. Under the regulations, no more than four unrelated persons can reside together in a single-family residence. Many landlords have ignored this regulation, which is challenging to enforce.
- Office of Off-Campus Services – Mr. Hintz, Director of the UConn Office of Off-Campus Services, provided an overview of the programs and services provided through his office. He explained that his office is designed to serve both commuting students as well as students who reside off-campus. Importantly, among other duties he serves as a liaison to residents who live in the vicinity of student rental housing. Mr. Hintz explained that the student code of conduct applies to certain off-campus behavior, and his office has developed a protocol to address behavior that falls under the jurisdiction of the code of conduct or is deemed otherwise problematic. One component of the protocol that needs to be improved is the timely flow of information from Mansfield Public Safety departments to Mr. Hintz's office.

Ms. Koehn asked Mr. Hart to comment on other nuisance abatement ordinances that the town has in effect. Mr. Hart explained that the town has a litter ordinance, which is enforced by the Department of Building and Housing Inspection and the Recycling Coordinator. Also, ordinances regarding noise, open container, possession of alcohol by minors and special police services provide the Mansfield police and resident troopers with additional tools to address nuisance behavior. Staff and the Town Attorney are reviewing the special police services ordinance for amendment, to enhance its effectiveness.

Ms. Koehn stated that she would like the committee at the appropriate time to review the subject of rent control, which she believes is an important issue affecting community quality of life.

5. Communications

Mr. Hart distributed a copy of a publication titled *What other College Communities Have Done: Examples of Regulatory Actions to Preserve the Single-Family Residential Character of a Campus Neighborhood*. This communication was issued in January 2005, and provided to Mr. Hart by Mr. Hintz. The publication was well-received by the committee members.

6. Committee Meeting Schedule and 7) Next Steps

The committee discussed how it would like to proceed with its work. Among other options, the members discussed the viability of forming two subcommittees – one focused upon review of the housing code and the landlord registration ordinance and the other on zoning regulations and nuisance abatement ordinances. After some discussion, by consensus the committee members determined that they would first engage in an information gathering stage, including presentations from code enforcement, student affairs and public safety personnel. Following the information gathering stage, the committee will develop short and longer term priorities.

Ms. Koehn and Mr. Hart reported that the Town Council has asked the committee to review, as a priority item, the water testing and septic pumping provisions of the housing code. Staff has prepared a draft amendment to the code for the committee's review.

The next meeting will be held at 7:00 PM on December 11, 2008. The Town Manager's Office will schedule a meeting location, and work with Ms. Koehn to develop an agenda and related materials. Mr. Hart will also ask the Information technology Department to

develop a WIKI or some other web-based tool that the committee could use to exchange ideas. As part of the next meeting, Mr. Hart will ask Mr. Nintean, Director of Building and Housing Inspection, to make a more detailed presentation regarding the enforcement of the housing code, and the landlord registration and litter ordinances.

Mr. Hart suggested that the committee members, with the exception of the chair, rotate the responsibility of serving as recording secretary. The members concurred with this suggestion, and Mr. Briody agreed to take the minutes for the December 11th meeting.

Ms. Koehn requested that the committee add two public comment periods – one before and one following the business items – to future committee agendas.

8. Adjournment

Ms. Koehn adjourned the meeting at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Hart
Town Manager